

INTEGRATION PAPER ON
LIFE'S QUEST
GROWING OUT

TEACHER CLASS 1-42

INTEGRATION PAPER OF
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Who is a chaplain and what does he do in the military? These are questions I have been struggling with during my C-22 experience. It may seem strange for a chaplain in the advanced course to be asking such questions. In the last two to three years I have been aware of an identity struggle within myself. I have observed chaplains performing activities for which the Army has already trained specialists. The most obvious example of this is chaplains who become trained in counseling and move into the area professional counseling which parallels the work of the Mental Hygiene personnel. Now there is nothing wrong with chaplains being trained in counseling. The basic skills are needed by every minister. The problem arises when the chaplain loses his identity as a clergyman and assumes the role of counselor. The chaplain has also moved into the area of Race Relations and Organizational Development. Again, it is good for the minister to have skill in these areas, but the problem is the same: the chaplain loses his identity as a clergyman.

It is this role ambiguity in the chaplaincy that caused me to take a close look at the military chaplaincy and my involvement in it. As a clergyman I have some very special tasks to perform in the service. I see the chaplain as a Pastor first and as an

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administrator and counselor second. The chaplaincy has ignored or denied this for many years. We chaplains have been groping to find meaning and worth in our tasks that would support and justify our existence.

Consequently, chaplains have been regarded as excess baggage by much of the army. Now I know that these are generalizations and that there are exceptions to this idea. The fact remains that for some reason when a minister enters the military he seems to leave his pastoral orientations in the civilian parish. I feel that we can provide commanders with a valuable and needed service in our identity as pastors.

The dynamics of the Advanced Course have been conducive to examining this issue. Interaction with both my peers and faculty members has helped to confirm the above idea. It was surprising to find how many of my colleagues have struggled with this same issue. The results of their struggles seem to indicate that it is necessary to feel that our work as clergymen be meaningful and needed. Instead of finding meaning and worth in functioning as a pastor, chaplains have involved themselves in tasks that are peripheral to this main task. It is apparent that the chief of chaplains' office is examining the struggle. There is an emphasis placed upon pastoral skill-building. Also the chaplains Board has been doing a study of parish development.

The core curriculum has helped me to evaluate who I am and what it means to be a clergyman in uniform. This process seemed ambiguous at times and produced great amounts of anxiety and hostility. In retrospect, I can see this was necessary to come to the understanding of who I am and what my mission is. The result of the core work was the establishment of a program of study that would allow me to sharpen some of the basic pastoral skills of preaching, and visitation, and to achieve a biblical-theological update. I am also keenly aware of the need for a minister to be adept at organizational management. A chaplain can not do everything by himself even though many times he may try. I included in my study a class in Organizational Effectiveness to meet this need.

The structure of the curriculum was in a series of seminars and a practical setting to practice application. The practical setting was provided by an interim pastorate in a local church. This pastorate offered many benefits. The most important was that it allowed me to get back in touch with the civilian community. This is extremely important in showing what the spiritual thinking of the new soldier is and also in identifying some of the needs of the military family. A second benefit of serving a church was that it allowed me to continue a pulpit ministry and keep my homiletical skills honed. A third benefit was that I was able to do pastoral visita-

tion and to see how meaningful this was to the life of the parish.

The army regulation says that we are advisors to the commander. In the past I have been frustrated to a degree because I felt that I really couldn't effectively advise my commander about the spiritual, and moral welfare of his command. It was like fighting a lot of little brush fires and never really being able to do any preventive action. By the time I was aware of a problem it was usually a last ditch effort by those concerned and many times too late. Much of my time was spent in visitation of troops in their places of work. While this can reveal many things about people it does not give a full picture of what is happening with people. My work in the Advanced Course has convinced me that it is imperative that as a chaplain I must attempt to get to know not only the men and women of the unit that I cover but also, through visitation, the families of these people.

Pastoral visitation can have many beneficial side effects. The primary element of visitation is to introduce the chaplain as a Pastor to the service person and his family. The chaplain is taken out of the unit environment and personalized. One of my colleagues described a visit to a service members family. When he first appeared at the residence, the family became very upset and thought something had happened to the service member. It was the belief of the family that the only time a chaplain came to a residence was to make a death notification or bring some other bad

news. Even if this isn't true it appears to be the impression many service families have. The chaplain is someone "whom my husband or wife works with but who doesn't have anything to do with me". It may be this concept of the chaplain that causes so many service members to take their families off post to worship. Visitation can bridge the gap between the unit and the family for the service member.

Through visitation of families a chaplain can also become aware of dynamics and needs that may affect the serviceman's performance in the unit. Preventive measures could then be taken before a crisis occurs. A chaplain who knows his people in their total environment can therefore advise the commander better than if he only first discovers trouble during a counseling session.

Another spin-off of Pastoral visitation is a possible increase of chapel attendance. Many families go off post to worship because they find security and acceptance. They are treated as individuals and their perceived needs are met. Our chaplains are as good as, if not better than, civilian ministers. I feel that chapels can offer families as much as the civilian parish can. At times the facilities are not as nice as in the civilian parish but I have found that is not of great significance if the chaplain is liked. The key is the authentication of the chaplain as a caring spiritual leader. If the people feel that the chaplain cares enough for

them to come to their homes then they feel that he can be their Pastor.

This now leads into another area of my study and that is in the field of Homiletics. The old saying, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink," is very true when it comes to preaching. It may be possible to get people to chapel but if the chaplain is a poor homilist then he may not get them to come again. Chaplains who have been outstanding in all areas of ministry have not made it in the military because they could not communicate from the pulpit or lectern. This is a shame but it points to the reality that commanders expect their chaplains to be good preachers. It is necessary to continually work at this task. Very few are gifted with the talents of Billy Graham or Charles Spurgeon.

The work at USACHCS in homiletics has been rewarding in that it not only caused me to work at disciplining myself in taking the time necessary to properly prepare sermons but it also provided a forum for an exchange of ideas with my colleagues. No matter how good a minister feels that he is in the area of homiletics there is always room for improvement. I have learned that if I have an assignment that does not allow me to preach I must continually work at sermon preparation. Homiletics is one skill that can not be left for a period of time and then returned to and have the skill maintained. To further help me improve my sermons, I have asked several laymen at the church I am working at to critique my Sunday sermons. This provided the feedback necessary for the modification of technique and content.

I was able to use the class work in organizational development to review and refresh concepts that I had already acquired during work for a Master's degree in the field of management. This proved to be invaluable in that many of the theories studied during the master's work took on shape and substance when dealt with in a different setting. The work of a chaplain as a pastor can be facilitated when the chaplain knows how to work with the various staff agencies in the army. Management of time and resources is the key to success for the chaplain in today's army.

I suppose that the most important lesson for me in the C-22 experience was that I didn't really know who I was as a chaplain. Through the course design and support of many fine friends I have been able to sort through many of my feelings and ideas. I am fully aware that every chaplain has his own concept of what a chaplain is. Not all feel as I do about the importance of pastoral leadership by chaplains in the military. The synthesis of my learning exploration is that chaplains who begin to function more as pastors in their units will ultimately be of greater service to the unit and derive more satisfaction from their work. I sense that there are many frustrated pastors like myself in the chaplaincy. I am now ready and eager to go back to a unit and attempt to apply some of the ideas gleaned here at USAHCMC. The chaplaincy has taken on a new perspective and I am excited about it. Only time will tell whether a chaplain can function as a pastor in the military setting.